

Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission

STAFF REPORT

DATE: September 26, 2019

TO: Chairman and Members, Northern Nevada Water Planning Commission (“NNWPC”)

FROM: Chris Wessel, Water Management Planner, Western Regional Water Commission (“WRWC”), and Frank McDonough, Desert Research Institute (“DRI”), Associate Research Scientist

SUBJECT: Report by DRI on last winter’s cloud seeding operations for the Truckee River and Lake Tahoe Basins, and possible direction to staff.

SUMMARY

Since 2009, DRI has conducted its cloud seeding program for the Truckee River and Lake Tahoe Basins (the “Program”) using funds provided by either the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (“TMWA”) or the Truckee River Fund (“TRF”), and the WRWC. At this time, the WRWC, TMWA and the TRF do not anticipate providing funding for the Program in the 2019-2020 water year.

Frank McDonough, Associate Research Scientist at DRI, will provide a presentation on last winter’s cloud seeding operations for water year 2018-2019.

BACKGROUND

Wintertime cloud seeding is focused on enhancing snowfall in mountainous regions to increase the snowpack, resulting in more spring runoff and water supplies in the surrounding areas. The Program has been in operation for more than 25 years. DRI estimates that cloud-seeding has boosted water in the snowpack for the Truckee River watershed by an average of 14,000 acre-feet a year over the last 30 years.

DRI funding cuts in 2008 threatened to eliminate its cloud seeding operations such that outside financing was necessary to continue the Program. In response, DRI applied to the TRF in 2009 to support the operation of five cloud-seeding generators in the Sierra Nevada. DRI received approval for partial funding from the TRF and the WRWC for the 2009-2010 water year. DRI has applied for and received funding from the TRF, and more recently TMWA, and the WRWC to fully or partially cover Program operation costs in each successive water year. DRI intends to utilize other funding sources to continue the Program for the 2019-2020 water year.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the NNWPC accept the -Report on last winter’s cloud seeding operations for the Truckee River and Lake Tahoe Basins, and provide direction to staff as appropriate.

CW:jp